

DECOLONIZATION, INDEPENDENCE, & CIVIL RIGHTS

BACKGROUND & CAUSES:

1. Why did European powers give up colonies?

World War II completed the economic and political weakening of European societies and led to a second major realignment in the modern era. Two events--the immediate outbreak of the cold war and the dismantling of colonial empires--created and realigned the world of the late 20th and 21st centuries. Because European powers no longer had the resources to rule the world and their empires, two new superpowers filled a global void. The cold war was a strategic struggle that developed between the United States and its allies on the one hand and the Soviet Union (Russia) and its allied countries on the other. The conflict between the forces of capitalism and communism produced a new set of global relationships, shaping the foreign policies, economic systems, and political institutions of nations throughout the world. The cold war and its bipolar world ended suddenly in the late 1980s as the Soviet-dominated nations of central and eastern Europe collapsed under the impact of mostly peaceful revolutions.

2. Define decolonization.

Although the cold war complicated the task of building nations from the wreckage of empires, in the three decades after World War II an irresistible wave of independence movements swept away colonies (decolonization) and empires and led to the establishment of new nations in Africa and Asia. This end of empire was one of the most important outcomes of World War II and was perhaps the most spectacular phase of global realignments, but the initial excitement that accompanied freedom from imperial control was halted by new problems such as rapid population growth, lack of economic development, and regional and ethnic conflicts among the former colonial lands.

THE PROCESS IN INDIA:

3. What was Gandhi's goal?

By the early 20th century, many Indians were calling for a greater say in the running of their country. During the 1920s, the Indian National Congress, the largest nationalist organization, became a mass movement under the leadership of Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi, with the stated goal of winning complete independence from Britain.

4. Who is Jinnah and what was his goal?

Partition of Bengal: The Indian National Congress protested when George Curzon, the British leader of India, partitioned, or divided, the province of Bengal (modern-day Bangladesh) into separate Hindu and Muslim sections in 1905. A boycott of British goods was organized, while extremists began a campaign of bombings and assassinations of British officials. Many Muslims, already hostile to the Hindu-dominated Congress, were alarmed by the protests to form a separate All-India Muslim League (later called the Muslim League) in 1906. The League lobbied to give Muslims their own separate voice in India's political affairs. To appease the nationalists, the British introduced the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909. These reforms allowed Indians to elect representatives to local legislative assemblies. Bengal was reunited in 1911.

5. What were the Rowlatt Acts?

Civil Disobedience: India, as an imperial state, was a major source of manpower and resources for the British war effort during World War I. Some 750,000 Indian men served and over 36,000 gave their lives. In return for India's support and sacrifices, Britain promised further reforms, but could not prevent continuous protests. In 1916, Mohandas Gandhi, a rising star within the Congress, forged a pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, to campaign jointly for independence. In 1919, Britain introduced the Rowlatt Acts, restricting the civil liberties of Indians and increasing government powers in order to control protests. Gandhi organized a series of non-violent protests against the Rowlatt Acts, including general strikes and demonstrations. At one protest at Amritsar, British troops opened fire on a peaceful crowd, killing nearly 400. The Amritsar Massacre caused deep public anger and stirred widespread popular sympathy for the nationalist movement.



6. What was the salt march in protest of?

New Constitution: In 1929, the Congress officially declared its goal of complete independence. The following year, Gandhi led thousands of followers on a 386 km (240 miles) march to the Arabian Sea, where they extracted salt from evaporated seawater. The salt march was a protest against taxes, particularly the tax on salt. Gandhi and the other Congress leaders were jailed, but the momentum was now with the nationalists. Gandhi was summoned to London for talks. The outcome was the India Act (1935). This created a new constitution that increased the representation of Indians in government. Yet, crucially, the British leaders and the governors retained the power of veto and control of finances, which left the nationalists frustrated.

7. What was the Quit India Movement?

Many Indian Muslims feared the prospect of being governed by the Hindu-dominated Congress in an independent India. In 1940, Mohammed Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League demanded a separate state to be called Pakistan, situated in the Muslim-majority areas of the north-west, centered on Punjab; and also in the east, centered on Bengal. The Congress opposed Jinnah's plan to partition India and instead supported a one-state solution.

World War: In 1939, Britain's declaration of war on Germany also declared India to be at war with Germany, without consulting Indian leaders. The local Congress governments resigned in protest. In 1942, Gandhi launched the Quit India movement, calling on Britain to withdraw from India or face nationwide civil disobedience. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were imprisoned, sparking violent protests. Jinnah's Muslim League cooperated with Britain, however, in the hope of securing British support for the creation of Pakistan.

8. What new nations were created in 1947?



Independence and Partition: In 1946, Britain announced its intentions of granting India independence no later than June 1948. Intensive negotiations began over how India would be governed. On August 16, 1946 the Muslim League organized demonstrations across the country, calling for the establishment of Pakistan. Violent clashes between Hindus and the Muslims spread throughout India. The continuing violence persuaded British and Indian leaders that partition was the only solution.

9. Who was India's first prime minister?

On August 14-15, 1947, Pakistan and India became independent nations. Partition was accompanied by bloodshed and slaughter on a massive scale. Over seven million Hindu and Sikh refugees fled from Pakistan to India and a similar number of Muslims in India fled to Pakistan. Between 500,000 and a million were killed as they crossed paths into a new nation. Gandhi, who had protested against partition and done his best to prevent the ensuing violence, was assassinated by a Hindu extremist on January 30, 1948. Jawaharlal Nehru, a friend of Gandhi, became India's first prime minister.

THE PROCESS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

By 1914, Thailand was the only state in Southeast Asia not under Western rule. However, colonial authority in the region was far from secure, with nationalist movements already emerging in many countries. Over the following decades, two major developments would together prove fatal to Western dominance in the region: first, the Japanese military occupation of Southeast Asia in 1941-1945; and, second, the indigenous struggles for self-determination (independence).

Decolonization: World War I left the colonial powers severely weakened and less capable of enforcing their rule overseas, which encouraged indigenous movements to push for independence. Britain, while defending its right to an empire in public, privately began to explore ways of handing back power to its Asian dominions. In the early 1920s, the Burmese felt encouraged by the progress of the nationalist movement in neighboring India to push for similar concessions, and were granted limited powers of self-rule. The USA, never a natural imperial power, actually drove the decolonization process in the Philippines, promising in 1935 full independence within ten years; it was actually granted in 1946. Other Western powers were less willing to give up their possessions. In French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, nationalist and communist uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s were ruthlessly suppressed by the colonial regimes.

10. What two developments weaker Western dominance?

11. What did the Japanese promise indigenous populations?

Japan began its takeover of the region in 1939. Its rapid conquests shattered the myth of Western military supremacy and added further fuel to the nationalist fire. The Japanese occupiers exploited the desire for self-determination by promising the indigenous populations a level of independence and following the Japanese surrender in 1945, the colonial powers faced strong resistance in their attempts to reimpose their authority in the region. Britain chose the path of peaceful negotiation, granting Burma independence in 1948. Withdrawal from Malaya took longer as British and Commonwealth forces became caught up in a prolonged battle with communist guerillas. Independence was eventually achieved in 1957 when the colonial regime handed power to anti-communist nationalists. The communists were finally defeated in 1960.

12. How did Asian economies change in the 1960s?

Following the war, nationalist leaders in the Dutch East Indies unilaterally declared independence, renaming the state the Republic of Indonesia. The Dutch fought to regain control of their former colony until 1949, when they withdrew under UN pressure. The longest and most bitter conflict, however, occurred in French Indochina.

Economic Boom: Beginning in the mid-1960s, much of Southeast Asia experienced a remarkable, 30-year period of economic growth. In East Asia, European and American multinational companies were eager to exploit the plentiful supply of cheap labour in the region. As a result, countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia - formerly known for exporting agricultural produce and minerals - developed large industrial bases and began exporting manufactured goods, including electronic devices, clothing and footwear. In the case of Indonesia, large supplies of oil and gas helped to fund the growth of heavy industry, including shipbuilding, steel and petrochemicals. The economic expansion of the region gave rise to rapid urbanization and a depopulation of rural areas; vast numbers congregated in shanty towns surrounding the major cities.



13. What happened in 1997?

The boom came to a sudden end in 1997. During preceding years, governments had acquired large budget deficits through over-borrowing; and unregulated banks had sustained huge losses through bad debts. In July 1997, heavy speculation against the region's major currencies forced them to devalue. Stock markets crashed and banks and businesses collapsed. Unemployment surged as the recession began to bite. The crisis sparked riots and toppled the 30-year government of President Suharto of Indonesia.

14. What was the SLORC and what were their goals?

Burma: Some countries, such as Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, and Laos, did not share in the post-colonial economic transformation of the region. In the case of Burma, problems arose from the moment it achieved independence in 1948. The new government faced rebellions from communist and ethnic separatist groups. The conflict rumbled on until 1962, when a revolutionary faction under General Ne Win seized control, ending democracy in Burma. The Ne Win regime introduced socialist reforms, including a centralized economy. It banned free speech and foreign investment. Country-wide pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988 forced Ne Win to resign. The army overthrew the government and replaced it with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which put down the protests and arrested the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. SLORC renamed the country Myanmar in 1989. It promised elections once a constitution had been approved, but this never happened. The SLORC was renamed the SPDC in 1997. Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 1995, rearrested in 2000, and again released in November 2010.

15. Define infrastructure.

THE PROCESS IN AFRICA:

During World War I, British, French and Belgian forces invaded German colonies in Africa. After the war, the German colonies in Southwest, East, and West Africa were handed over to neighboring colonial powers. The interwar period saw rapid economic development in many parts of the continent. Colonial governments built hundreds of miles of roads and railways to link inland centers of agricultural and mineral production with the coastal ports. The development of a transparent infrastructure and consequent growth of trade resulted in a dramatic expansion of towns and cities.

16. Who led the calls for independence in Africa?

Decolonization: Organized opposition to colonial rule had begun in some African colonies in the early 20th century. However, it was only after World War II that this grew into a mass movement, as an emerging class of educated, urbanized Africans led calls for independence. In some cases, independence arose relatively peacefully; in others, it only occurred after a struggle. In 1951, the former Italian colony of Libya became the first African nation to achieve independence. Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia followed in 1956. The Gold Coast won its independence as Ghana in 1957, and by 1965 almost every other sub-Saharan colony had followed suit.



17. Who was the first to achieve independence in Africa?

Struggles for Independence: Conflict generally only arose in colonies with established white communities. French colonists in Algeria were determined to hold onto the territory, and independence was conceded in 1962, after an eight-year conflict with nationalists that cost around a million lives. British rulers in Kenya were faced with the nationalist Mau Mau rebellion during the 1950s, which paved the way for independence in 1963. In Rhodesia, following the white minority's 1965 unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), it took 15 years of guerrilla warfare before the nation won its freedom as Zimbabwe. South African-controlled Namibia gained its independence in 1990.

18. Define apartheid.

In South Africa itself, the powerful white minority government imposed apartheid (racial segregation) in 1948 and ruthlessly put down the African National Congress (ANC) protest movement. In 1962 the anti-apartheid campaigner and leader of the ANC's armed wing, Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned. By the 1980s, the pressures of continued internal rebellion, combined with international condemnation, finally led the government to negotiate an end to apartheid and the implementation of multiracial democracy in 1994. Since then, the ANC has been South Africa's ruling party.



19. Who was Nelson Mandela?

Belgium's hurried decolonization of the Congo in 1960 left power in the hands of a weak government. Civil war led to the rise of Joseph Mobutu's brutal military regime in 1965. Portugal's colonies, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique achieved their independence by 1975, after long and bloody guerrilla wars.

After Independence: The excitement that greeted independence was all too quickly dispelled. Few states were able to offer their citizens security or prosperity. The colonial borders they inherited bore little or no relation to the realities of ethnic settlement, and violence was the frequent outcome. Ethnic rivalry in Rwanda led to genocide in 1994, inflicted by the Hutu majority against the Tutsi minority.

20. Why did many states fall to military takeovers?

With elected governments often ill-prepared for such challenges and democratic traditions still weak, many states fell prey to military takeovers. Among the more brutal and corrupt regimes were those of Jean-Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Republic and Idi Amin in Uganda. During the Cold War, African nations often became the battlegrounds for rival interests, with brutal dictators kept in power by means of communist or Western aid. Rebel armies, assisted by South Africa and the USA, fought against regimes in Mozambique and Angola. In 1974, a pro-Soviet communist regime won control of Ethiopia.

With the ending of the Cold War, the 1990s witnessed a resurgence of multi-party, democratic governments in a number of countries, including Mali, Malawi, Niger (although it returned to military rule in 2010) and Zambia. Political instability, however, remained the norm in many places; ethnic or religious civil wars occurred in Nigeria, the Congo, Algeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

21. Why did Africa's economy suffer in the 1970s?

Africa suffered economically in the 1970s from a rise in oil costs and a drop in prices for home-grown commodities such as coffee and cocoa. National debt rose in most African countries, causing economic decline and extreme poverty. In Zimbabwe, the brutal land reforms of Robert Mugabe led to internal upheaval, population displacement and economic collapse. Disease remained another major challenge; by 2009, around 67 per cent of all people infected with HIV / AIDS worldwide were in sub-Saharan Africa.

22. What transformed American life after WWII?

CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES:

Following World War II, the USA experienced unprecedented economic growth and a major population boom. Prosperity and technological advances transformed American life. Millions moved to newly built suburbs, watched television, and used automatic dishwashers. Car ownership dramatically expanded, as did the road network; and out-of-town shopping malls, motels, fast-food restaurants, and gas stations sprang up to serve the motoring community. Prosperity was not shared by all, however, and millions remained in poverty, including a high proportion of African Americans.

23. What was the goal of the SCLC in Selma?

Since the abolition of slavery in the USA in 1865, African Americans had continued to suffer discrimination in jobs, housing, education, transport, and other areas. A movement to extend civil rights to blacks gathered pace after World War II. In 1954, the movement gained a significant victory when the Supreme Court ruled segregation in schools illegal. In the early 1960s, the movement, now led by charismatic Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr., organized numerous demonstrations, including a mass 'March on Washington' in 1963. In early 1965, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) made Selma, Alabama, the focus of its efforts to register black voters in the South. That March, protesters attempting to march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery were met with violent resistance by state and local authorities. As the world watched, the protesters (under the protection of federalized National Guard troops) finally achieved their goal, walking around the clock for three days to reach Montgomery. The historic march, and King's participation in it, greatly helped raise awareness of the difficulty faced by black voters in the South, and the need for a Voting Rights Act, passed later that year.



24. What was passed in 1965? What effect did that have?

President Lyndon Johnson sympathized with the cause and his administration pushed through several acts between 1965 and 1968, ending legal race-based discrimination in the United States.

August of 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which guaranteed the right to vote (first awarded by the 15th Amendment) to all African Americans. Specifically, the act banned literacy tests as a requirement for voting, mandated federal oversight of voter registration in areas where tests had previously been used, and gave the U.S. attorney general the duty of challenging the use of poll taxes for state and local elections. Along with the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act was one of the most expansive pieces of civil rights legislation in American history. Its effects greatly reduced the disparity between black and white voters in the U.S. and allowed a greater number of African Americans to enter political life at the local, state, and national level.

EFFECTS AND CONCLUSION:

The cold war and decolonization reshaped the 20th and 21st century world. Other transforming forces were also at work, among them globalization, a process that widened the extent and forms of cross-cultural interaction among the world's people. Technological advances dissolved old political, social, and economic barriers and promoted globalization. Improvements in information, communication, and transportation technologies, for instance, eased the movement of peoples, diseases, and cultural preferences across political and geographic borders. In this highly interdependent world, the task of dealing with problems of a global magnitude--such as human rights, epidemic diseases, gender equity, and environmental pollution--increasingly required international cooperation. Greater global integration encouraged similar economic and political preferences and fostered common cultural values, but forces promoting distinct cultural traditions and political identities also arose to challenge the universalizing effects of globalization.